

EARTH DAY WRITING CONTEST 2012

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Essay topic: What can young Vietnamese do to improve the awareness of environmental issues in Vietnam?

Environment is essential for human life, without which humans cannot live, survive and thrive. Environmental contamination is mainly caused by humans. To ensure sustainable development, people need to live environmentally friendly, preserve and protect the environment clean. Preserving and protecting the environment is the responsibility of each one of us.

In Vietnam, a country moving towards the path of economic development via modernization and industrialization, pollution is a pressing issue. We all know that pollution is the condition when the environment is contaminated by chemical and biological factors which affect human health and other living organisms. There are many types of pollution, such as air pollution, caused by dust, smoke, and the discharge of chemicals into the atmosphere. For example, toxic gases such as carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, chlorofluorocarbon substances (CFCs), and oxides of nitrogen come from industrial wastes and vehicles' exhaust. Water pollution occurs when surface water flows through the household waste, industrial waste water, the contaminants on the ground, and groundwater sewage. There is also noise pollution, the condition where there is excessive noise caused by vehicles, aircraft and industrial noise.

My hometown, Ho Chi Minh City, is the busiest growing city in the nation, where pollution appears in everyday conversation. There are many causes for environmental pollution: emissions from motorcycles, industrial waste and chemical waste from power plants and industrial parks that contain many toxic compounds and fine dust. In this bustling city, traffic is an enormous problem. You can imagine the narrow streets packed with small and large vehicles, each with its loud horn and fuming exhaust. The dust, smoke and noise affect not only the street users, but also every other residents of the city because the air and the city environments are deeply disturbed. And that happens on a daily basis. In addition, urban industrial plants and factories are important sources of pollutions. Their daily operations release many forms of pollutants into the environment: chemicals that directly affect human health and cause fatal diseases; smokes that destroy the ozone layer protecting the atmosphere; and most importantly, without proper waste management, all these toxic substances are being released directly into residential areas, into the air, and into our water resources.

The environment is very important. Do you hear? Our environment is in danger and our lives are threatened. If we do not save the environment, we will perish just as our environment does. As a young high school student, I can do my part in making small changes to the environment closest to me, which I hope will lead to a bigger environmental impact.

Firstly, keeping trees is important, as trees absorb carbon dioxide, and therefore help to filter the air. We can keep trees by selecting types of durable furniture that can be used for a long time, such as eco-friendly bamboo. We can also increase the number of trees by planting more. In my home, we have a little green garden on the top floor, which I help to water every day. It is a small garden, but it sure gives my family a good breath of clean air in this busy city. Secondly, I can conserve energy and save electricity by electrical appliances such as hair dryers, computers, televisions, and mobile phone chargers when not in use. Moreover, we should start using clean energy: use sources of renewable energy whenever possible, such as solar energy. For example, students can ride electric bicycles instead of gasoline. This is the kind of clean energy, for the production, and consumption of them does not give rise to emissions causing the greenhouse effect as using fossil fuels. We can

take advantage of sunlight: during the day, I usually flung my windows wide open to make use to natural sunlight, to reduce power consumption, and at the same time, save my parents some money. Scientific progress also helps us to conserve energy: fluorescent lights, although a little more expensive, they last longer and save up to 75% power than normal bulbs.

Let's face the fact that we consume more than what nature can provide for us and everything is running out, including water! In addition to saving, we also need to reuse to limit the amount of waste released to the environment. Small things like reusing a piece of paper, a nylon bag, a pot of water will add up to a big change in our environment. We can also organize our own household waste and reuse all that are possible. For example, in my family, vegetable wastes can go to the small garden as it helps to fertilize the soil, nylon bags that are still clean can be saved for future use, plastic bottle, tin cans, and paper are gathered for selling back to material waste vendors (we call them “ve chai” in Vietnamese) – which is not only green, but also earns me pocket money.

What do you think? These are the things that I and most of students in Vietnam can do. These are all things which are small, simple, and almost effortless. It only takes a minute to sort the rubbish before dumping them into rubbish bin, just 5 seconds to turn off all the electrical equipment when not necessary. As students, my classmates and I can also participate in a voluntary activity such as the Earth Hour, Greenpeace, and the Environmental Protection Fund to help raising environmental awareness. I believe that every day we just do one or a few of the above, our environment will gradually clean and our lives will no longer be threatened. We can live comfortably and happily without anxiety or fear.